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Bachelor Thesis

Integrated Marketing Communications

A quantitative study of the perceptions of integrated marketing communications in the Swedish market

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Abstract

When planning to implement a marketing tool such as Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC) into ones company, marketers need to know what IMC means or is perceived to be in their environment. The definition of IMC is shown in the background chapter of this study and more definitions are stated in the theoretical frame chapter as well. Months of research lead to the conduction of a study, that is to test the perception of IMC in the Swedish market by sampling and sending questionnaires to Swedish marketers. Five Hypotheses were formed to test if each factor has a positive or negative relation with IMC. A questionnaire was formulated that tested all of the five main success factors (customer focus, targeted communication, customer-brand relationship, synergy and communication channels) in relation to IMC and how the Swedish marketers perceived each one of the factor's connection to IMC. The marketers were chosen due to the fact that they would know most about IMC since it's within the field of marketing.

It was found that Swedish marketers support 2 out of the 5 hypotheses. This means that the results showed that Swedish marketers perceive that there is a positive relationship between both channels of communication and IMC, and customer brand relationship and IMC, while targeted communication, customer focus and synergy were denied to be as positively related to IMC. This study would be of great help to a Swedish company trying to implement IMC because it gives directions to the Swedish perception of it, thereby making it more clear to know exactly what they are implementing, which help them find out in what way they should implement IMC, in order to avoid failures that could be very expensive.

Keywords of this study: integrated marketing communications, success factors of imc, customer focus, targeted communication, customer-brand relationship, synergy, channels of communication, swedish perceptions of imc

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1 Introduction

Today there are many tools used for marketing. Many Ideal figures have been drawn to create "the way" to do marketing. IMC is constructed to be a non mass-marketing tool that focuses on its target market specifically, makes it essential to start relationships with customer, it shows the importance of one coherent message the user of IMC is trying to portray to its customers, and finally it allows marketers to know what resources or communication channels they have at hand because IMC makes it important to now your resources of marketing before you actually start marketing your product. These characteristics of IMC are the very reason the authors of this study became interested in this topic specifically.

This chapter introduces the topic of the thesis and starts with the background into the topic of IMC. The specification of the problem being studied was next discussed and followed by the purpose. This chapter will then conclude with the research question.

1.1 Background

Integrated marketing communications (IMC) has been studied and used in the global market for the past 20 years and still today, there are many different definitions and/or perceptions of IMC. Many practitioners accepted IMC as a valid new marketing tool and others have contradicted the idea of IMC as a misunderstanding (Cornelissen & lock, 2000; Schultz & Kitchen, 2000). As integrated marketing communications deals with merging or combining communication tools to form a combined message, Hutton (1996) argues that "…*marketing, advertising, and public relations practitioner's had been adept at coordinating their efforts long before the term IMC came into vogue."* (p. 156). This is while other researchers argue that IMC is a new brand concept for the emerging digitilized environment and state the importance of integrated marketing methods/efforts (Schultz & Kitchen, 2000).

During the past twenty years, discussions on IMC were mainly based on definitions and theoretical understanding and this discussion is still taking place today (Laurie & Mortimer, 2011). Regardless of the theoretical development of integrated marketing communications, a large number of agencies have continued to deploy integrated marketing communication programs (Kitchen et al., 2008). As stated, *"IMC would appear to be defined by those implementing it"* (Kitchen et al., 2004, p.23), meaning that many different definitions have been created as a result of the length of time the theoretical process has been taking place for

integrated marketing communications and in the manner agencies have chosen to implement it. Furthermore, as stated by Kitchen et al., (2008); *"...one of the reasons that the understanding of IMC understanding has emerged so slowly is because its practitioners have been more interested in its development and implementation than its measurement value"* (p.531).

In 2004, Schultz developed a definition of integrated marketing communications that in the author's opinion best describe what integrated marketing communications is and suits the study well. IMC is *"...a strategic business process used to plan, develop, execute, and evaluate coordinate, measurable, persuasive brand communication programs over time with consumers, customers, prospects, and other targeted, relevant external and internal audiences"* (Schultz & Schultz, 2004, p.20). The authors of this thesis have composed a table of various different integrated marketing communications definitions to help illustrate and explain the vast definitions of integrated marketing communications that have been composed over the years; please refer to section literature review for further readings.

Essentially, integrated marketing communications composes all of the firm's marketing channels; i.e. public marketing, e marketing, advertisements, telemarketing, and composes a unified message throughout these communications tools to be sent to their targeted audience. This notation is important for firms because having a correlated and unified message, drastically reduces the chance of confusion or misinterpretations of the brand message a firm would like to present to their audience. Studies proposed different success factors for implementing IMC in an organization. In this regard, Kitchen et al., (2004) reference five main components of IMC as stated below that will be used as a tool and or checklist for this study. This notion will be explained further below:-

"1. The primary goal of IMC is to affect behavior through directed communication

2. The IMC process should start with the customer or prospect and then work backwards to the brand communicator.

3. IMC should use all forms of communication and all sources of brand or company contacts as prospective message delivery channels.

4. The need for synergy, with coordination helping to achieve a strong brand image.

5. Finally, IMC requires that successful marketing communications needs to build a relationship between the brand and the customer" (p.23).

1.2 Problem Discussion

Although IMC as a concept has been active for nearly three decades it is still in development but regardless of IMC still being in development, it appears companies are indeed implementing it. *"It is obvious that IMC as "a new marketing communication strategy" is being extensively utilized by advertising and PR agencies"* (Kitchen et al., 2008, p.43).

Considering companies are implementing it they need to know what IMC is about and what it means. With these so many different definitions of IMC and some firms even utilizing their own definitions of the concept, it is possible that not everyone will understand it right. This misunderstanding of the concept could lead to not being able to profit from IMCs benefits. Luck and Moffatt (2009) have claimed that when firms do not get the desired results from implementing it, they become disappointed with marketing.

Integrated Marketing Communications, implemented well in an organization can provide many benefits. IMC being a big part of the process of creating and sustaining brand identity and brand equity is one of the major reasons for its growing importance (Luck & Moffatt, 2009). This is shown in a study where authors Dewhirst & Davis (2005) studied a Canadian tobacco company that gained greater brand equity and greater shareholder value by utilizing IMC processes such as data-driven targeting and communication. Another benefit IMC provides is strengthening the relationship the customer has with the brand by identifying the customers' communication channels and increasing brand knowledge while still assuring consistency in their messages (Laurie & Mortimer, 2011). According to Reid et al., (2005) being consistent with company's brand message is one of main causes of having a successful brand.

Managerial perceptions are of importance for companies to be able to implement a successful IMC, and this is what this research will address but in the context of Swedish firms. For the authors of this study, it is important to study the perceptions Swedish firms have of the IMC concept and its successful implementation. This is due to the fact that there was a lack of research into IMC in the Swedish market. To study IMC, the authors will use the five main components of IMC that authors Kitchen et al., (2004) reference in their study. These five success factors were recognized to be very significant to IMC due to the previous studies the authors read on the topic of IMC and its variety of definitions. These factors were mentioned in many articles as connected to IMC and it is for this reason the authors decided to examine these factors.

1.3 Purpose

This study aims to investigate managerial perception of Swedish firms towards success factors of IMC implementation.

1.4 Research question

- How do marketing managers perceive Integrated Marketing Communication and the five success factors within the Swedish markets?

2 Theoretical Framework

The main theories of this study are the five factors of IMC. This chapter will be divided so that each and every factor of IMC will be fully explained as well as the IMC concept in itself. The factors of IMC were all chosen based on their repeatedly emphasized importance to IMC in various articles. Also, the relationship between the factors and IMC will be explained by the end of each section to keep the reader on the same train of thought as the authors. Before going through each and every factor of IMC, the authors' decided to start with marketing communications to further clarify the origins of Integrated Marketing Communications.

2.1 Marketing Communications

One definition of marketing communication was released by American Marketing Association in 2004 as *"... an organizational function and a set of processes for creating, communicating, and delivering value to customers and for managing customer relationships in ways that benefit the organization and its stakeholders" (*Gundlach & Wilkie, 2010, p.89). Another definition was found which states *"the means by which firms attempts to inform, persuade, incite and remind consumers – directly or indirectly – about the brands they sell"* (Keller, 2001, p.819). Since the previous definition that was released in 2004 by AMA (American Marketing Association) was argued to be too narrow to define the wide approaches that are used today to practice marketing and communication, in 2007 AMA published another more recent and reformed version *"... the activity, set of institutions, and processes for creating, communicating, delivering, and exchanging offerings that have value for customers, clients, partners, and society at large"* (Gundlach & Wilkie, 2010, p. 90).

After changes, reforms and developments, marketing communication has become internationally recognized as the most efficient way for companies to communicate with their customers in regards to their brands and offerings (Keller, 2001). The reforms and changes that marketing communication has undergone throughout its existence, has eventually given it the important roles it has today. *"Marketing Communication represents the voice of a brand and the means by which companies can establish a dialogue with consumers concerning their product offering"* (Keller, 2001, p. 823). This means that the role of marketing communication is to help

companies to (through advertising) speak to their customers and establish a corporate image in the mind of their customers.

The previously stated roles of marketing communication, shows that there are a great deal of benefits to be attributed to this tool. The benefits of marketing communication are for example; customer loyalty, less vulnerability to competition, larger margins and various brand extension opportunities (Keller, 2009). The benefits of marketing communication are many and they vary depending on the situation the Marketing communication concept is practiced in. *"Firms will vary in their ability to realize these benefits depending on their own marketing skills and resources and the marketplace circumstances and context in which they operate. Some firms face strong competitive challenges that reduce the likelihood and nature of these branding benefits"* (Keller, 2009, p.140). The benefit that have made marketing communication a major tool of marketing today is that, due to marketing communication consumers can be told what to feel towards a certain brand, how to perceive it, what it stands for and what to associate it with. If this is done right both customer loyalty and profits could be yielded.

The major link between marketing communication and integrated marketing communication are the types or channels of communication. According to Keller (2009) these marketing channels of communication are:

1. Advertising: a paid form of presentation or promotion of ideas or offerings by a sponsor.

2. Sales promotion – different short-term influences that promotes a trial or purchase of an offering

3. Events and experiences –when a company pays for activities or programs that are made to create brand-related experience.

4. PR – different programs created to promote or to secure a company's image or its own offerings.

5. Direct marketing – the use of email, phone etc. or Internet to communicate directly with specific customers to yield responses from them.

6. Interactive marketing – online activities created to engage customers to eventually raise awareness, improve image or sell products and services.

7. Word-of-mouth marketing – person to person oral / written / electronic communications which, (due to a purchasers past experience) promotes the purchase or usage of products or services.

8. Personal selling – the face-to-face interaction with one / many potential buyers for the purpose of making presentations, answering questions and acquisitioning orders.

What separates IMC from MC (marketing communication) is how a company decides to utilize these channels. While MC is merely a framework that helps a company get to know the marketing communication channels they have at hand, Integrated Marketing Communication helps with the direction and coordination of the existing channels. Therefore, Integrated Marketing Communication is explained further in the following section.

2.2 Integrated Marketing Communications

Since IMC is the main topic of discussion, in both this overall study and in this theory chapter, the authors decided to provide the reader with a historical overview of definitions. These definitions will be given in the table "evolution of IMC definitions".

Table 2.1: Evolution of IMC Definitions

Year	Author	IMC Definition
1989	*American Association of Advertising Agencies*	A concept of marketing communications planning that recognizes the added value of a comprehensive plan that evaluates the strategic roles of a variety of communications disciplines, e.g., general advertising, direct response, sales promotion and public relations—and combines these disciplines to provide clarity, consistency, and maximum communications impact.
1991	*Caywood, C., Schultz, D.E., & Wang, P.*	[IMC is a] concept of marketing communications planning that recognizes the added value of a comprehensive plan that evaluates the strategic roles of a variety of communication disciplines – general advertising, direct response, sales promotion, and public relations – and combines these disciplines to provide clarity, consistency, and maximum communication impact (p.2).
1993	*Schultz, D. E., Tannenbaum, S. I., & Lauterborn, R. F*	Integrated marketing communications means talking to people who buy or don't buy based on what they see, hear, feel, etc.—and not just about [a] product or service. It means eliciting a response, not just conducting a monologue. And it means being accountable for results . . . delivering a return on investment, not just spending a budget (p.17).

Year	Author	IMC Definition
1996	*Duncan, T., & Caywood, C.*	[IMC is] the process of managing all sources of information about a product/service to which a customer or prospect is exposed which behaviourally moves the consumer toward a sale and maintains customer loyalty (p.18)
1997	*Percy, L.*	Integrated marketing communications is the process of developing and implementing various forms of persuasive communication programs with customers and prospects over time (p.2).
2004	*Schultz, D. E., & Schultz, H.*	Integrated marketing communication is a strategic business process used to plan, develop, execute, and evaluate coordinated, measurable, persuasive brand communication programs over time with consumers, customers, prospects, and other targeted, relevant external and internal audiences (p.20).
2005	*Kliatchko, J.G.*	IMC is the concept and process of strategically managing audience-focused, channel-centred, and result-driven brand communication programs over time (p.23).
2008	*Kliatchko, J.G.*	IMC is an audience-driven business process of strategically managing stakeholders, content, channels and results of brand communication programs (p.140).

Besides giving an understanding of what IMC truly means, these definitions are useful when conceptualizing a main definition to stand by in this study; this definition is the most recent one the authors could find, by Kliatchko in 2008. Since the definition was made during 2008, it most certainly should encompass the adjustments and reforms of today's marketing channels and business markets, and therefore should be more applicable to this particular study.

The American Association of Advertising Agencies (AAAA) produced the very first definition that (the authors found) was made in 1989. In this time period, IMC was not very different from MC. One can note on the definitions made by AAAA (1989) and Shultz, Caywood and Wang (1991) that the definitions shows great similitude with the previously stated definitions

which speaks about MC and were made by AMA 2004. To simplify, MC and IMC were both stated to be assets that add values to marketing plans and are carried out through efficient and valid marketing communication channels. This shows that IMC was not its own form of marketing communication and it also shows that it was a concept under construction.

Although the IMC definitions of 1989 and 1991 came with a great deal of popularity, a new definition was needed to keep up with the developments within marketing strategies and communications. By stating *"...it means eliciting a response, not just conducting monologue. And it means being accountable for results...delivering a return on investments, not just spending a budget"* (Schultz et al., 1993, p. 17), it was made apparent that marketers were using IMC to capture the response of their customers and (through sales) increase their profit margin. In 1993, IMC aimed for customer awareness and customer influence and it did not only revolve around describing and promoting a particular product or service anymore (ibid).

In 1996, IMC was developed into a tool that would influence the behavior of customers; this development originates from the change in attitudes of marketers. Marketers knew that they should target the decision making process of their customers to try to further increase the response rates companies try to elicit from end users (Reid et al., 2005). Therefore, Duncan and Caywood redefined IMC to include customer's behavior to the concept.

In 2004, IMC went from a simple concept to a more complicated business process that also encircles branding. *"Advertising and promotions of brands drive traffic and sale volume; marketing efforts and outcomes are measured and managed at the brand level; and brands are central to a firm's response to short term competitive moves..."* (Dawar, 2004, p. 31). Knowing this, Schultz and Schultz (2004) were the first to include any notion of brand into the definition of integrated marketing communications. It was clear to see how IMC moved together and evolved together as the market expanded and branding started to become vital importance for companies. Therefore nowadays, IMC encompasses multiple different departments within a firm, as well as a broad range of communication tools.

After presenting the different definitions and the way they have evolved throughout the existence of IMC, one can take note on the different arguments and issues regarding IMC. Those issues originate from the lack of clarity to the definitions of IMC and therefore establish a blurred image in the minds of marketers. One of the arguments that is published against IMC, basically says that IMC is MC, it is just *"...Dressed up in new clothes and given a new title"* (Kitchen &

Schultz, 1998, p. 469). This means that IMC is nothing new. It is the same old traditional way of marketing communication only it was made to look different and up-to-date marketing when it really is not. While there are marketers against the idea of IMC, there are ones that are pro IMC.

Their argument is that what makes IMC so different and important is the way that it makes marketers use their marketing tools. The marketing tools are used to create synergy through coordination with the goal of improving corporate image. Another factor added to that argument is how efficiently IMC encompasses new arising channels of marketing e.g. the Internet (Kitchen & Schultz, 1998). Since in 1998, Internet was the new growing channel of communication to utilize when communicating with customers, it was used as an example to justify that argument.

Arguments, such as the ones mentioned above, contribute to problems within implementation. Since many marketers have their own specific view of what IMC is, they intend to treat the implementation process differently. Therefore, the aim of this study is to investigate managerial attitudes and perception of Swedish firms towards success factors of IMC implementation. The authors hope that, this will help reduce some of the existing obscurity of IMC in Sweden. The 5 factors of IMC are customer focus, Targeted communication, Relationship between customer & brand and finally, synergy. At the absolute end of this chapter the reader will be provided with a section where all of these factors are combined to fully identify the purposes behind them and their utilization.

2.2.1 Customer Focus

Customer focus is the assurance of continually allowing the voices of customers to be a part of companies' decisions and discussions (Bharadwaj et al., 2012). To be customer focused means that marketers will take into account the feedback and needs of customers when formulating business strategies. This definition shows how important it is for marketers to research their markets before conducting any strategic business decisions. The importance of customer research was verified by the statement *"The Marketing Science Institute (MSI) now identifies that learning about the capabilities that underlie a customer-focused organization is a paramount 2010–12 research priority"* (Bharadwaj et al., 2012, p. 1012). This statement also takes into account that it is not only important to yield information about customers but to mainly know what types of data-gathering resources a company has at hand.

A beneficial outcome of customer focus that has been stressed by Fuch and Schreier (2011) was that firms that show their existing customer interest would create a customer-oriented image of the company. This image in turn will help yield new customers while making current

customers more loyal. These forms of chain reactions can generate a very bright and profitable future for a company that exercises their customer focused resources right.

To attain a successful customer focused method, one needs to have the *"ability to translate customer input about features and value into hit products"* (Rust et al., 2010, p. 99–100). This ability, as stated, will help marketers both understand their customer while carrying out the demands of their customers and make them into a reality by creating offerings that encompasses these demands.

"The IMC process should start with the customer or prospect and then work backwards to the brand communicator" (Kitchen, 2005, p. 75). This particular sentence summarizes the factor of customer focus. It basically points out that marketers should base their marketing communication on the response they generate from customers in their market. Eventually, this will lead to a more efficient marketing strategy since it familiarizes the marketers with the needs and wants of the customers.

2.2.2 Targeted Communication

Targeted communication can also be described as direct marketing, which is defined as *"Direct marketing is a data driven interactive process of directly communicating with targeted customers or prospects using any medium to obtain a measurable response or transaction via one or multiple channels"* (Scovotti & Spiller, 2006, p.199). Direct marketing deals with creating marketing programs from the information you get from your customers. This enables the marketers to develop a more customized marketing program from the information.

"When targeting potential adopters of a new product, firms should focus first on people with (proportional) effect on others, often labeled "opinion leaders," "influentials," or "influencers." The idea is that getting to opinion leaders early will help accelerate the overall adoption process in the population" (Haenlein & Libai, 2013, p. 65). This is done by directing information through, e.g. advertising, to the most influential players or end users in a particular market. Since they are the most influential ones, they could help to further establish a desire for a product in the overall market, which is very beneficial when companies try to establish an image and increase the desire of a product in a particular market (Alden et al., 1999).

"The primary goal of IMC is to affect behavior through directed communication" (Kitchen, 2005, p. 75). Targeted communication is more of a goal than a tool or approach, unlike the rest of the factors. The eventual goal of targeted communication when it comes to IMC is that customers

should feel a certain attachment or emotional link between them and the product/brand, and this link would be the main driver of customer purchase (ibid).

2.2.3 Customer-Brand Relationship

Before even creating a relationship between a brand and a customer, companies need to make sure that their image is clear and consistent, *"A key guideline for building strong brands is to have an identity, position, and execution that are consistent over time"* (Dewhirst & Davis, 2005, p. 88). After the step of clarity and consistency is achieved, one can start with creating a relationship.

To define this section, one can resort to the most relatable notion to this particular topic, which is the notion of Customer Relationship Management. CRM is defined as " *a cross functional process for achieving; a continuing dialogue with customers, across all their contact and access points with, personalized treatment of the most valuable customers, to ensure customer retention and the effectiveness of marketing initiatives*" (Hutt & Speh, 2010 p. 104). This definition shows the true intent and meaning behind the "relationship between customer and brand" factor.

The benefits of establishing a healthy customer relationship with a brand are divided into two different parts:- external benefits and internal benefits. Some of the external benefits are: enhancing brand/product/company image, building brand awareness and preference, stimulating product trial, acquiring new customers, keeping existing customers, enhancing customer satisfaction, keeping or expanding market shares, companies will find it easier to reach their objectives when it comes to relationships. The internal benefits namely are: companies will find it easier to both produce products and increasing their quality, they would be able to forecast how much to produce of particular product, they would gain insight on how to manage their resources, gain more accurate data when conducting customer research (Woods, 2010). These benefits are all of great importance to companies with a dedication to ensure a profitable and successful feature and therefore IMC puts a high emphasis on this particular feature.

"IMC requires that successful marketing communication needs to build a relationship between the brand and the customer" (Kitchen, 2005, p. 75). This feature distinguishes itself from the other 4 by speaking of relationships. Due to both the internal and external benefits, customer relationships are key assets when it comes to IMC. To be able to give a caring image of a certain company with the intent of generating various benefits and (in the long run) profits, IMC has made this topic one of its main defining factors.

2.2.4 Synergy

"The concept behind synergy in marketing communication is coordination of messages for delivering more impact" (Wang, 2006, p. 160). The main idea of synergy is to coordinate all forms of communication to increase the impact on the specific message/image that the companies are trying to portray to their customers. Wang (2006) states the following "*This impact is created through synergy—the linkages that are created in a receiver's mind as a result of messages that connect to create impact beyond the power of any one message on its own"* (p. 160).

"The effects of using similar messages in advertising and product publicity were validated by streams of research focusing on the effects of message repetition on attitude strength (Harkins and Petty, 1987). This type of synergy materializes when messages that are conceptually integrated and that repeat essential information over time through different channels and from different sources come together to create coherent knowledge and attitude structures in audiences (Moriarty, 1996)."(Wang, 2006, p. 160). The importance of having one message within the firm is validated here as that helps in creating a coherent knowledge of the firm and brand in the customers mind.

When it comes to IMC and Synergy, as one of its main factors, it was explained that *"the need for synergy, with coordination helping to achieve a strong brand image"* (Kitchen, 2005, p. 75). This shows that IMC uses synergy to reach the ultimate goal of IMCs' very existence, which is to provide marketers the ability to vigorously direct the right message to the right group of people. Therefore, Synergy became one of the five factors of IMC.

2.2.5 Communication Channels

Communication channels are defined as channels that *"enable the flow of various types of information between buyers and sellers"* (Li & Russel, 1999, p. 190). The meaning behind all forms of communication is that marketers should utilize all the channels of communication they have. Although this Not only includes the different types of channels of communication (presented in section 2.1 Marketing communication), but also any brands, contacts or marketing business strategies they have present. *"IMC should use all forms of communication and all sources of brand or company contacts as prospective message delivery channels"* (Kitchen et al., 2004, p. 23)

This means that companies should combine and coordinate their various types of communication channels in order for them to have a more effective delivery channel. To combine all forms of communication channels is much more effective than to use them separately and in

different ways. Therefore, combining and coordinating the channels of communication that companies have at hand will also create a more consistent image that will eventually represent a company in a more favorable and memorable way.

Although at first glance IMC seems like it merely focuses on external targets, it is also emphasized that "all forms of communication" also refers to, internal communication. The communication between different departments must work unified in a cross-functional manner, not only within themselves but also with their external sources and agencies, this claim is supported by the following statement, *"The cross functional process means that all departments must work together in unison in planning and monitoring phases of brand relationships"* (Kitchen, 2005, p. 75).

3 Hypotheses and Research Model

This chapter of the study deals with the proposition of a research model with accompanying hypotheses that will be used as means of investigating integrated marketing communications and the five success factors that was presented in the previous chapter.

3.1 Research Model

Based on the literature review that was done in the previous chapter, the five success factors are indeed significant for the successful implementation of IMC. With this in mind, this study is about investigating the perceptions of the Swedish firms regarding the five success factors towards IMC implementation. In order to accomplish this purpose, the research model below was proposed.
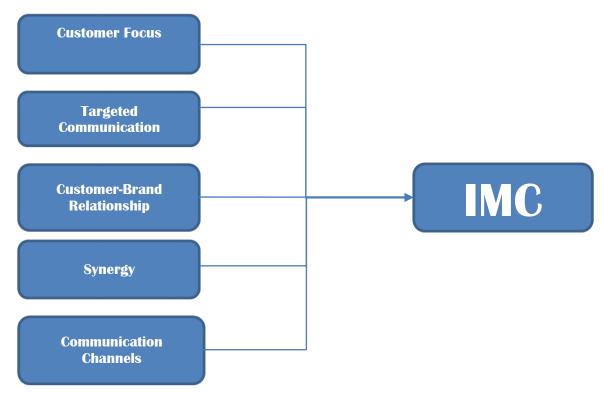

Figure 3.1: IMC Research Model

The research model's factors and their connections will be further explained in the sections below as well as establishing hypothesis for each factor of the model.

3.2 Research Hypotheses

Based on the literature review on IMC and its five main factors, several hypotheses have been presented. These hypotheses will make it easier to understand what this study is researching.

3.2.1 Customer Focus

Being customer focused has been defined in the literature review as utilizing the customer feedback when creating business strategies. This essentially means learning about the customer's habits (Laurie & Mortimer, 2011). The process of going about gathering customer data or habits to use, is also important. Thus making customer databases vital to being customer focused. All data or information on the customer that is collected is what the concept of databases is all about (Kitchen & Schultz, 1998). As stated by Mithas et al., (2005), "*Glazer (1991) provides examples of how FedEx and American Airlines used their investments in IT systems at the customer interface to gain valuable customer knowledge*" (p. 202). As shown here, by being customer focused and using databases to gather information about customers can give you valuable insight into the customer. The important thing here is for the marketer to use this valuable customer knowledge to create an effective IMC strategy and therefore successfully implement it.

This motivated the establishing of the first hypothesis in this study:

H1: There is a positive relationship between the utilization of customer feedback and the implementation of IMC

3.2.2 Targeted Communication

Targeted communication has been described in the literature review as using direct marketing. With direct marketing being defined as the developing of customized marketing programs from using database technology. The data gathered from using the databases can be used by the marketer to better understand who they are sending their messages to (Nowak & Phelps, 1994). At the same time, the customization of the marketing programs aids the customer to connect with the content and thus affecting their behavior. As mentioned previously in the study, affecting customer behavior is a main goal of IMC.

This brought about the second hypothesis:

H2: There is a positive relationship between the utilization of direct marketing and the implementation of IMC.

3.2.3 Customer-Brand Relationship

Clear and consistent brand image has been identified as vital to the fostering of a positive relationship between the brand and customers. *"Brand image is defined here as perceptions about a brand as reflected by the brand associations held in consumer memory"* (Keller, 1993, p.3). With brand image, the marketer needs to create a clear and consistent image of the brand in the customers mind. A favorable brand image influences customer loyalty (Hung, 2008).

The relationship between the brand and customers can be built and maintained by the usage of CRM systems as explained in the literature review. CRM is defined as the maintaining of the continuing dialogue with the customers as well as ensuring customer retention through personalized treatments. In their study about Interactive IMC, Peltier et al., (2003), mention the use of CRM to develop a more customized IMC.

With the importance of brand image and CRM to the customer-brand relationship, this study will evaluate the customer-brand relationship factor with the use of CRM and brand image.

Here is the third hypothesis:

H3: There is a positive relationship between a good customer-brand relationship and the implementation of IMC

3.2.4 Synergy

Synergy has to do with the linking of the firm's messages to create a coherent and consistent message to send to their customers. The firm's messages are connected into one coherent message; this message's impact is believed to be beyond that of any message on its own.

"The basic concept of IMC is synergism, meaning the individual efforts are mutually reinforcing with the resulting effect being greater than if each functional area had selected its own targets, chosen its own message strategy, and set its own media schedule and timing" (Assael, 2011, p.53). Since IMC and synergy are connected in such a way, this lead to the fourth hypothesis:

H4: There is a positive relationship between synergy in message planning and the implementation of IMC

3.2.5 Communication Channels

With all forms of communication channels, the authors of this study mean advertising, PR, sales promotion and personal selling. With regards to IMC, it deals with the coordination of all communication channels available to the firm to directly get in touch with their customers. This is because, the customers could be using several channels and the more channels the firms uses, the easier it will be to get to the customers. Also, the channels should be coordinated in a way that they work in synergetic manner, that is, their joined impact should exceed the impact of one of them. One of the IMC definitions given in the table in the literature review section, says *"(IMC is a) concept of marketing communications planning that recognizes the added value of a comprehensive plan that evaluates the strategic roles of a variety of communications disciplines, e.g., general advertising, direct response, sales promotion and public relations—and combines these disciplines to provide clarity, consistency, and maximum communications impact"* (American Association of Advertising Agencies, 1989). It is important to IMC to use all these different channels in combination with each other and coordinated so as to get maximum communications impact. This revealed the fifth hypothesis:

H5: There is a positive relationship between the coordination of the communication channels and the implementation of IMC

4 Methodology

This chapter of the study describes the methodology used in this study. It describes methods taken to achieve the research objectives such as the research approach, design and strategy. It also shows the data sources, data collection method and collection instrument such as questionnaire.

4.1 Research Approach

The following research approaches were chosen due to their usefulness for the study. The following sections will mention inductive, deductive, qualitative and quantitative research approaches and out of the mentioned approaches, deductive and quantitative are in focus.

4.1.1 Inductive versus Deductive Research

Starting off with clarifications of definitions regarding Inductive and deductive, it was stated that in an Inductive research, *"the researcher begins by gathering detailed information from participants and then forms this information into categories or themes. These themes are developed into broad patterns, theories, or generalizations that are then compared with personal experiences or with existing literature on the topic"* (Creswell, 2007, p. 65).

When it comes to defining deductive research it was mentioned that deductive research is "*a method that employs conflicting findings as a means of developing hypothesis"* (Crano & Brewer, 2002, p. 6). These definitions show that to have an inductive research would not be fitting for this particular study due to the fact that this study is about theory and hypothesis testing. That is why the authors chose to use the deductive approach. This will give the authors the chance to test the theories/hypotheses with the data collected.

4.1.2 Quantitative versus Qualitative Research

With any research, there is always the question of whether qualitative or quantitative approach is best suited for the research but it is good to first define each approach before the best suited approach for this research is chosen.

"Quantitative Research as an inquiry into a social or human problem, based on testing a theory composed of variables, measured with numbers, and analyzed with statistical procedures, in order to determine whether the predictive generalizations of the theory hold true" (Sogunro, 2001, p.3).

"Qualitative Research as an inquiry process of understanding a social or human problem, based on building a complex, holistic picture, formed with words, reporting detailed views of informants, and conducted in a natural setting" (Ibid).

Quantitative research deals with the use of numbers and statistics to make generalizations whereas qualitative research deals with the use of words and descriptions and makes conclusions based on thoughts and beliefs. With the objective of this study being to get the perceptions of as many Swedish firms as possible, and to make generalizations based on statistical methods, this research will take the quantitative approach.

4.2 Research Design

Research design establishes the plan that is followed to gather and analyze in order to achieve the research objectives (Oghazi, 2009; Beheshti et al. 2014). The research can be designed in three different ways. They are exploratory research design, descriptive research design and causal research design. *"Exploratory research provides new insights—the domain of discovery in philosophy of science terms—and often sets the groundwork for further investigation"* (Zikmund et al., 2010, p.16). It is useful in the early stages of the research to clarify the problem of the research as well as gives the chance to gather as much information you can gather on the research topic. *"Descriptive research describes the characteristics of objects, people, or organizations. Much of business information is based on descriptive research"* (Ibid). Descriptive research is very useful when the characteristics of people are being studied. *"Causal research is the only research that establishes cause and effect relationships. Most commonly, causal research takes the form of experiments such as test markets"* (Ibid). This research design deals with how one variable determines another variable.

Due to the objective of this study being to study people's perceptions, this research will be descriptive in nature.

4.3 Data Sources

In a research study, there are two types of sources of data available. These two data sources are primary and secondary data. Primary data is defined as data *"observed or collected directly from first-hand experience"* (BusinessDictionary.com, 2014). This data is gathered by the researcher for their own research objectives. Whereas secondary data is defined as *"data that has previously been collected (primary data) that is utilized by a person other than the one who*

collected the data" (Investorwords.com, 2014). This data is gathered by another researcher for their own research and may not be the same as your research. It is for this reason that this research will utilize primary data.

4.4 Research Strategy

The table presented below gives a brief overview of the different types of research strategies one can choose from when conducting a study. This study focuses on gathering numbers and specific data to see the effect of integrated marketing communications has on the Swedish marketing environment. For this data to be collected in the most orderly fashion the authors have chosen to conduct a survey method because as seen above, the *survey* method answers the questions of *who, what, where, how many, and how much* which suits this study.

Table 4.1: Different research strategies (Source: Yin 2009, p. 8)

Strategy	Form of research question	Requires control over behavioural events?	Focuses on contemporary events?
Experiment	How, why	Yes	Yes
Survey	Who, what, where, how many, how much	No	Yes
Archival analysis	How, why	No	Yes/No
History	How, why	No	No
Case study	How, why	No	Yes

4.5 Data Collection Method

Choosing the correct data collection method is crucial for a study because it will ultimately result in your study being viable and worthwhile doing. Given the fact that this study is a quantitative study, the most logical and most efficient way to gather the data required for this study would be to conduct a structured questionnaire that will be targeted at marketing managers. A questionnaire can be structured by the authors or taken from previous studies and the questionnaire in question can be indirect or direct to the targeted audience depending on the purpose of the study (Malhotra, 2010; Oghazi et al. 2012). For the purpose of this study an indirect questionnaire was formulated by the authors (See Appendix 1) and was sent to various

companies in Sweden. Before the survey was conducted, the firms in question were previously contacted and asked for permission of submission of the questionnaire.

4.6 Data Collection Instrument

In this section of the methodology chapter, the construction of the survey will be discussed. First the operationalization of the factors will be discussed, then the questionnaire design and then finish with the pretesting of the questionnaire. This is all done in order to construct a high quality survey.

4.6.1 Operationalization and Measurement of Variables

After the hypotheses for the different concepts/constructs were developed to test the conceptual model, the logical next step was to transform them into measurable variables. This is called operationalization, whereby it *"entails devising measures of the concepts in which the researcher is interested"* (Bryman & Bell, 2011). In the table below, the authors gave a conceptual definition for each of the constructs, then operationalized the various constructs to develop measurement tools. Several measurement tools were developed for each concept/factor as they are more useful than single measurement tools (Oghazi & Österberg, 2003; Churchill Jr, 1979). These were then used to create the questionnaire. The table also shows how many questions are used for each construct as well as where they are adapted from. Majority of the questions are developed by the authors for this study but some were adopted from another study (See Questionnaire Design).

Table 4.2: Conceptualizations and operationalization of key concepts

Concept	Conceptual Definition	Operational Definition	Measurement of Variables	Questions/ Adopted From
Customer Focus	"Ability to translate customer input about features and value into hit products" (Bharadwaj, Nevin, & Wallman, 2012 p.1013)	Using customer feedback to make improved business decisions	– Improved decisions – Information databases – Customer information	– Questions 1-3 – Own

Concept	Conceptual Definition	Operational Definition		Measurement of Variables		Questions/ Adopted From
Targeted communication	"Direct marketing is a data driven interactive process of directly communicating with targeted customers or prospects using any medium to obtain a measurable response or transaction via one or multiple channels" (Scovotti & Spiller, 2006, p.199)	Using customer data to create more customized communication	– –	Customized marketing communication Reaching specific customers	– –	Questions 4-6 Own
Customer-Brand Relationship	"A cross functional process for achieving; a continuing dialogue with customers, across all their contact and access points with, personalized treatment of the most valuable customers, to ensure customer retention and the effectiveness of marketing initiatives" (Hutt & Speh, 2010 p. 104)	Using tools such as CRM to maintain customer relationship by treating them effectively	– – –	Brand image CRM Well defined brand	– –	Questions 7-9 Own
Synergy	"The concept behind synergy in marketing communication is coordination of messages for delivering more impact" (Wang, 2006, p. 160).	Coordination of communication to increase impact of a specific message to customers	– – –	Clear message Impact on customers Unified messages	– –	Questions 10-12 Own

Concept	Conceptual Definition	Operational Definition	–	Measurement of Variables	–	Questions/ Adopted From
Communication channels	"Communication channels enable the flow of various types of information between buyers and sellers" (Li & Russel, 1999, p. 190)	Channels of information that's used by a company to reach their customers		– Direct contact – Dialogue with customers – Unified communication channels		– Questions 13-15 – Own
IMC	"IMC is an audience-driven business process of strategically managing stakeholders, content, channels and results of brand communication programs. (Kliatchko, J.G., 2008, p. 140)	IMC is the management of stakeholders, content, channels, and results with the intention of establishing a successful business process		– Targeted Communication – Brand programs – Unified messages – Affecting customer behaviour – Dialogue with customers		– Questions 16-20 – (Kitchen and Li, 2005)

4.6.2 Questionnaire Design

Since it was decided that a survey was to be conducted, the next logical step was to design the questionnaire. The designing of the questionnaire was very important as the data collected depends on the type of questions asked, so the right questions had to be asked. Majority of the questions were based on the operationalization of the variables that was being studied. Couple of the questions for the IMC variable was adapted from a study on the perceptions of IMC from the perspective of a Chinese Ad and PR agency (Kitchen & Li, 2005). It is beneficial to use a previously validated questionnaire as it will help in saving both time and resources (Boynton & Greenhalgh, 2004; Philipson & Oghazi 2013). The choice of whether to have open-ended or closed-ended questions was then considered. Open-ended questions are those questions that give the respondent the choice of the answer while closed-ended are those that give the answers so that the respondent chooses one (Oghazi et al. 2012; Penwarden, 2013). Even though, open-ended questions give a lot more information, the decision was made to go with closed-ended questions since it is more suitable for these types of studies. Nevertheless, two open-ended questions were

included in the last part of the questionnaire to get the experience and the position of the respondents in their firms. These two questions were excluded from the analysis of the results due to the fact that the authors did not see any change on the results from using the two questions.

As these questions are about measuring the constructs, the type of measurement scale had to be chosen. There are four common types of measurement scales; Nominal, ordinal, interval and ratio (Oghazi, 2009). The interval scale was chosen with a 7-point Likert type scale, with the scales ranging from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree". This was due to a similar study the authors read that used the same measurement methods.

Once the questions and measurement scale were decided on, the physical design of the questionnaire was worked on. The authors used an online survey designer called QuestionPro. It became 20 closed-ended questions with 2 open-ended questions as previously stated.

4.6.3 Pretesting

After constructing the questionnaire, the next step is to see if the questions are clear and well-constructed. This is done to make sure that the data collected is accurate and consistent in the responses, as well as that the questions being asked are measuring what is intended to measure (Collins, 2003; Oghazi, 2013).The authors sent the questionnaire to three experts who reviewed the questionnaire and gave some feedback on it. This feedback assisted in the reconstructing of the questionnaire and the final version was then sent to the target sample.

4.7 Sampling

When a study has chosen to go about the path of gathering data through a population and in this particular study, a survey method; it can be useful if one collects data from every member of the chosen populous. The authors of this study found it essential to avoid misunderstandings about population and sampling, therefore to further clarify these terms, the following are to be used as an indication of each respective word; "*A population is the set of all the individuals of interest in a particular study*" and as for sampling the definition is, "*A sample is a set of individuals selected from a population, usually intended to represent the population in a research study*" (Gravetter & Wallnau, 2008). Population is the persons of interest when conducting a study, which suggest that authors should find effective ways of identifying that particular population. From that population, authors need to find representatives that can speak for the majority of that specific population, those representatives are the ones to be used as samples.

The reality of this is that there is not sufficient time or resources to collect all the data from all members of a population, thus, a sample of the population is chosen as a more practical and sensible approach (Altmann, 1974). A good reason for the sampling is to get a representative of the population and with the results from this sample, make generalizations of the entire population (Marshall, 1996).

4.7.1 Sampling Frame

In order to describe the sampling frame chosen for this study, it is appropriate to define what population was chosen in the first place. Because this study deals with integrated marketing communications, all Swedish firms that use any means of communicating to the market (retailers, advertising agencies, etc.) were included in the general, large population choice for this study. A sampling frame is, is the list of the population that the sample is chosen from (Bryman & Bell, 2011).

Once a general population has been set for the study the authors did a thorough search of selecting companies that are not only relatively accessible but would be willing to help students by responding to surveys. The authors agreed upon using a website (VA.se, 2014) that lists the top 500 Swedish companies. These top companies were chosen because of reliability, accessibility, and the highest probability of using or have knowledge of integrated marketing communications.

4.7.2 Sample Selection

As stated above the reason behind the decision to implement the top 500 Swedish companies as a sample selection is because these companies are regarded as reliable, accessible, and specifically of their size and diversity, could have a higher probability of using and/or have knowledge of integrated marketing communications. The authors of this study found that the suitable population for this study would be Swedish firms. Yet, the sampling only took place with 300 out of 500 biggest companies in Sweden. These 300 top companies in Sweden act as representatives for the overall Swedish firms. Each company was contacted prior to sending out the questionnaire and a cover letter followed when the survey was sent out.

4.8 Data Analysis Method

"*To handle the data gathered by your research, you need to use straightforward methods of data analysis*" (Franses & Paap, 2001). Data analysis deals with selecting the most suitable statistical techniques, which are based upon factors resembling measurement scale, method of

data collection and the nature of the study (i.e. quantitative vs qualitative). SPSS 22 data analysis method was used for this study based upon the knowledge that SPSS is commonly used for quantitative studies (see section 4.1.2).

4.8.1 Data examination and Descriptive Statistics

Once all the data from the surveys that have been sent out to marketing managers have been collected, the next step involved would be to analyze and asses the data. According to Pallant (2001), *"SPSS is an enormously powerful data analysis package that can handle very complex statistical procedures".* A free trial statistical analysis program (SPSS) was downloaded by the authors to be used in converting the raw data into numbers and figures that could be more easily read and understood. This in term is descriptive statistics which can be used to transform raw data into a form that makes it easier to understand (Oghazi, 2014). Data analysis begins with calculation of descriptive statistics for the research variables (Larson, 2006). Once these calculations have been made, they help summarize various aspects of the data collected, giving details and information about the population from which the sample was drawn (ibid).

Descriptive statistics variables fall into 3 general categories: location statistics (mean, median, mode), dispersion statistics (standard deviation, range), and shape statistics (skewness, kurtosis); the *me*an is all the variables calculated together and divided by the number of variables there are (Larson, 2006). Range is a simple dispersion statistic technique that helps provide information about the inconsistency of the data about the measures of distribution, range is *"the difference between the maximum and minimum observed values: that is, range(x) =maximum(x)-minimum(x)"* (ibid). Standard deviation may be viewed as the average deviation from the mean, if all values are similar, the standard deviation will be lower than if the values are more spread out (ibid). In the descriptive data analysis the author's calculated the mean, standard deviation, and range scores of the reviewed data.

4.8.2 Multiple regression analysis

Multiple regression is a flexible method of data analysis that may be appropriate whenever a quantitative variable is to be examined in relationship to any other factors, expressed as independent or predictor variables (Berger, 2003). In order for the variable to be measured an Adjusted R Square calculation is needed in order to see if there is a positive or negative relationship between the two variables. Adjusted R squared is *"A useful application of multiple regression analysis used to determine whether a set of variables contributes to the prediction of Y*

beyond the contribution of a prior set" (ibid). Meaning, adjusted R squared is a useful tool in testing hypothesis of a particular study; henceforth, the authors will be using multiple regression analysis and the calculation of adjusted R squared to determine the outcome of the hypotheses stated in chapter 3. This is done by determining a beta value for the multiple regression analysis; the beta value illuminates if a hypothesis is supported or not by computing how an increase in the independent variable will affect the dependent variable (Malhotra & Birks, 2007). This will be later explained and shown in chapter 5.

4.9 Quality Criteria

After the method selected of gathering data have been established, it is important to verify the quality of the methods presented to ensure a well conducted study. The following section will be devoted to explaining and verifying the quality of this study. The following three sections are devoted to help establish and explain the validity and each will be explained and defined.

4.9.1 Content Validity

"Content validity is based on expert judgments about the relevance of the test content to the content of a particular behavioral domain of interest (Messick, 1990, p.12). Content validity checks the appropriateness, relevance and it checks how valid the measurements are to its main objectives and purposes. Therefore, the authors of this study will most certainly conduct a content validity to ensure the precision of the measurements.

One possible method to check content validity is by asking people with experience and expertise in the field of the study (Bryman, 2008). This is done to make sure if the measurements reflect the constructs in question (Ibid). As mentioned in section 4.6.3, the authors have conducted a pretest of the survey by sending it to three experts. This achieves the content validity required for this study.

4.9.2 Construct Validity

"Construct validity is evaluated by investigating what qualities a test measures, that is, by determining the degree to which certain explanatory concepts or constructs account for performance on the test" (Messick, 1990, p. 11). In short, Messick is referring to that construct validity is how well, an operationalization measures the correct constructs.

There are two aspects of construct validity; the first one being convergent validity and the second one is discriminant validity (Oghazi, 2009). *"Convergent validity is the degree to which multiple attempts to measure the same concept are in agreement while discriminant validity is the*

degree to which measures of different concepts are distinct" (Bagozzi et.al. 1991). Meaning, convergent tests the degree of correlation between one variable and another, while discriminant means finding the degree of distinctions between one variable and another. This was tested by checking the correlation of the variables.

4.9.3 Criterion Validity

"Criterion-related validity is evaluated by comparing the test scores with one or more external variables (called criteria) considered to provide a direct measure of the characteristic or behaviour in question" (Messick, 1990, p. 11). Messick (1990) continues in explaining that criterion validity is very much *"focused to spotlight selected relationships with measures held to be criteria for a particular applied purpose in a specific applied setting."* (p. 13). With this, Messick meant to say that criterion validity is to measure the relationship between different variables that are brought together due to your study. Therefore, using SPSS program, the authors test and measure the relationships between the variables (being each and every one of the 5 factors and IMC) to examine the impact each variable has on the other.

4.9.4 Reliability

Reliability is essentially another element that is used to determine the quality of the chosen measurement instruments. It is defined as *"basically whenever we are measuring something, there is some element of error, called measurement error. Reliability then refers to the extent to which text scores are free of measurement error"* (Muijs, 2011, p. 67). That is, how the instruments measure what is needed without giving some errors in the process. Reliability is also said to deal with the measurement instruments and their ability to stay consistent (Winter, 2000). Reliability in a quantitative study is assessed in two ways: repeating measurement and internal consistency. Repeating measurement as the name says refers to the ability of repeating the same study at a different time. Whereas internal consistency is tested by calculating Cronbach's Alpha (Muijs, 2011). The authors use the SPSS program to calculate the Cronbach's alpha, with accepted values being above 0.6, in order to establish the reliability of the study due to the fact that the authors do not possess the time to repeat the study at a different time.

5 Analysis & Results

In this chapter, the authors present to the reader the analysis and results of the research conducted for this study. This data presented has been statistically analyzed using the SPSS program. The response rate and descriptive statistics are first presented. Then followed by the measures used to test reliability and validity which are Cronbach's alpha and correlation analysis respectively. The last data presented is the regression analysis which is used to test the hypotheses of this study.

5.1 Response Rate

The survey was sent to an amount of 300 Swedish firms. As explained earlier in this study, these firms were chosen from a list of Sweden's biggest firms (Va.se, 2014). The authors believed they would be a great choice for being representatives of the Swedish firms since they are the most influential and recognized firms in Sweden. Out of the 300 firms that made up this study's sample, 83 firms responded to the questionnaire. That yielded a response rate of 27.6% and according to Baruch & Holtom (2008) is considered to be a low response rate.

5.2 Descriptive Statistic

In the table below, the descriptive statistics of the sample are presented to summarize the data. Firstly, the table shows the number (N) of responses for each question. Most of the respondents answered all the questions but very few of them left a couple of answers blank. Then, the range for the minimum and maximum responses from the Likert-scale of 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree) for each question is shown as well. The mean for the responses is also shown and the mean in this table shows the average response for each of the questions. The mean ranges from a minimum value of 4.88 to the highest value of 6.43. The last data presented in this table is the standard deviation which shows the dispersion of the data. The std. deviation ranges from a minimum value of 0.928 to the highest value of 1.386. The

Table 5.1 also has abreviations for each of the questions. These stand for the different factors:- customer focus (CF), targeted communication (TC), customer-brand relationship (CBR), synergy (SYN), communication channels (CC) and lastly integrated marketing communications (IMC). As shown in the table, each factor has three questions with the exception of the last factor (IMC) which has five.

Table 5.1: Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Descriptive Statistics					
CF1	83	1	7	6.43	1.139
CF2	83	1	7	6.06	.954
CF3	83	3	7	5.82	.965
TC1	82	3	7	5.73	.969
TC2	83	2	7	5.65	.956
TC3	83	1	7	5.42	1.072
CBR1	83	2	7	5.52	1.063
CBR2	83	2	7	5.14	1.138
CBR3	83	3	7	5.60	.987
SYN1	83	2	7	5.29	1.153
SYN2	81	3	7	5.17	1.212
SYN3	83	2	7	5.13	1.386
CC1	82	2	7	5.15	1.248
CC2	82	3	7	5.41	1.054
CC3	83	1	7	5.13	1.359
IMC1	83	2	7	5.45	1.107
IMC2	81	2	7	5.12	1.053
IMC3	83	2	7	5.46	.928
IMC4	83	2	7	4.88	1.374
IMC5	81	2	7	5.58	1.160
Valid N (listwise)	76				

5.3 Reliability

Reliability deals with the measurement instruments of the constructs and their consistency (Cortina, 1993). As discussed in the methodology section, the reliability was tested using Cronbach's alpha. It was calculated using the SPSS program. Researchers differ on the opinion of the accepted value of Cronbach's alpha. Peterson (1994) considers anything lower than 0.6 to be unacceptable. Similarly, the minimum accepted value by Theron et.al (2005) was found to be 0.6. Therefore in this study, the authors will accept values above 0.6 to be reliable. The table below shows the constructs and their Cronbach's alpha values.

Table 5.2: Reliability Test

Construct	Cronbach's Alpha
Customer Focus (CF)	0.653
Targeted Communication (TC)	0.563
Customer-Brand Relationship (CBR)	0.723
Synergy (SYN)	0.878
Communication Channels (CC)	0.772
Integrated Marketing Communications (IMC)	0.759

From the table above, the results show that five of the constructs are reliable with values 0.653 (CF), 0.723 (CBR), 0.878 (SYN), 0.772 (CC) and 0.759 (IMC) as they are all above the 0.6 limit. These constructs are reliable and therefore can be used again at another time to measure the same thing. Unfortunately, the same could not be said for all the constructs. The Targeted Communication (TC) has a value of 0.563, which is lower than the limit. This means that it is not reliable and therefore cannot be used to measure this construct again.

5.4 Validity

The correlation analysis has been calculated to test the construct validity of measurement instruments. Construct Validity is defined as how much a measurement instrument is measuring the right construct (DeVon et al., 2007). Table 5.3 shows the results of the correlation analysis and all the results are lower than the 0.9 limit. Any result above 0.9 would mean that two constructs are highly correlated and are essentially measuring the same thing (Bryman & Bell, 2011). In this study, none of the constructs were highly correlated and are not measuring the same thing since the highest value found on table 5.3 was 0.745. This shows that since the constructs are not highly correlated then discriminant validity is present (Oghazi, 2009).

Table 5.3: Validity Test

		CF_Sum	TC_Sum	CBR_Sum	SYN_Sum	CC_Sum	IMC_Sum
CF_Sum	Pearson Correlation	1	.453**	.584**	.251*	.442**	.478**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000	.024	.000	.000
	N	83	82	83	81	81	79

TC_Sum	Pearson Correlation	.453**	1	.518**	.195	.426**	.468**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000	.081	.000	.000
	N	82	82	82	81	81	78
CBR_Sum	Pearson Correlation	.584**	.518**	1	.497**	.657**	.718**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000		.000	.000	.000
	N	83	82	83	81	81	79
SYN_Sum	Pearson Correlation	.251*	.195	.497**	1	.619**	.395**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.024	.081	.000		.000	.000
	N	81	81	81	81	80	77
CC_Sum	Pearson Correlation	.442**	.426**	.657**	.619**	1	.745**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000		.000
	N	81	81	81	80	81	77
IMC_Sum	Pearson Correlation	.478**	.468**	.718**	.395**	.745**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	
	N	79	78	79	77	77	79

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

5.5 Hypothesis Testing

With the reliability and validity presented in the sections above, the hypotheses testing will be now presented. The hypotheses were tested using regression analysis and the results are presented in tables 5.4 and 5.5. The results from table 5.4 shows the Adjusted R^2 and is 0.623 or 62.3% as is evident in the table below. This reveals that 62.3% of the dependent variable (IMC) is determined by all of the independent variables (CF, TC, CBR, SYN and CC).

Table 5.4: Adjusted R^2

Model Summary				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.805[a]	.648	.623	.490

a. Predictors: (Constant), TC_Sum, SYN_Sum, CF_Sum, CBR_Sum, CC_Sum

Table 5.5 is used to determine whether the hypotheses that were presented in chapter 3 are supported or rejected. The beta value in the table below shows how much each independent variable is increased with every time the dependent variable increases with 1. This shows the impact each independent variable has on the dependent variable. The significance is also checked to see if the value is lower than 0.1 in order to establish if the hypothesis is supported but if the value is higher than 0.1, then the hypothesis is rejected.

Table 5.5: Coefficients

		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
Model		B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
1	(Constant)	1.114	.559		1.993	.050
	CBR_Sum	.369	.110	.364	3.361	.001
	SYN_Sum	-.104	.065	-.149	-1.610	.112
	CC_Sum	.433	.087	.557	4.950	.000
	CF_Sum	.006	.094	.006	.065	.949
	TC_Sum	.072	.097	.064	.739	.462

a. Dependent Variable: IMC_Sum

H1 (CF): Starting with the first hypothesis which stated that "there is a positive relationship between the utilization of customer feedback and the implementation of IMC". Looking at the results above, the beta value of the CF construct shows 0.006 which means with every 1 that is increased by the IMC construct then CF increases with 0.006. The sig. or p-value for this construct is 0.949, which is higher than the limit of 0.1, establishing that the first hypothesis is rejected.

H2 (TC): The second hypothesis stated that "there is a positive relationship between the utilization of direct marketing and the implementation of IMC". The beta value for this construct shows that with every 1 that IMC increases with, the TC construct goes up by 0.064. With a p-value of 0.462, this hypothesis is also rejected.

H3 (CBR): The third hypothesis is "there is a positive relationship between a good customer-brand relationship and the implementation of IMC". The beta value for this construct shows with every 1 that IMC increases with, this construct goes up with 0.364. This hypothesis is supported with a p-value of <0.01

H4 (SYN): "There is a positive relationship between synergy in message planning and the implementation of IMC" is the fifth hypothesis. This construct has a beta value of -0.149, which means a negative beta value. This reveals that when IMC increases with 1 the SYN construct decreases with its beta value. This hypothesis is also rejected with a p-value of 0.112 but it's nevertheless very close to being supported.

H5 (CC): The last hypothesis in this study stated that "There is a positive relationship between the coordination of the communication channels and the implementation of IMC". This construct increased with 0.557 with every 1 that the IMC construct increased with and has a p-value of <0.01. Therefore this hypothesis is also supported.

6 Conclusion

The following sections of this chapter will present a recap section that will hopefully remind the reader why the authors conducted such a study. The sections after that will deal with discussions of hypothesis testing, here the authors will show which hypothesis was rejected and accepted, and conclude what that result means. Also, there will be both theoretical and managerial implications were the authors, state how this study benefits the theory of IMC and how it also benefits the managers that finds interest in implementing IMC into their company. The last sections will deal with the limitations to this study as well as recommendations for future research.

6.1 Discussions

Even though IMC has been present for the last three decades, it is being constantly changed and adjusted to fit the environments that it is being implemented into. This constant change, have caused marketers to perceive IMC differently. For example, according to Kitchen et.al (2004), in order to establish a well-functioning IMC into an organization, companies need to include all of the five mentioned factors of IMC. Yet, according to the marketers that took part in the sampling of this study, the Swedish market perceive that IMC is based mainly on channels of communication and Customer brand relationship, the rest of the factors are perceived not to be as important. The authors will present more about this on the upcoming sections of this chapter.

As previously mentioned in the problem discussion chapter, when marketers misunderstand IMC, they tend to implement it poorly in their company, this error can lead to companies not being able to fully enjoy the benefits of that IMC bring and also can make marketers lose faith in marketing (Moffatt, 2009). The benefits of IMC are many, but the main benefit of IMC is how well it helps a company to create a process that is based on sustaining brand identity and brand equity, the benefits are also one of the main reasons to why IMC is considered important (Luck & Moffatt, 2009). This is why the authors found it interesting to focus on investigating managerial perception of Swedish firms towards success factors of IMC implementation.

6.2 Discussion: Hypothesis testing

This section of the study is to examine the hypothesis analysis done in chapter 5 and to essentially see if the conceptual model of integrated marketing communications presented in chapter 2 is supported. The section bellow will explain the findings of the five hypotheses in this

study as a continuation from chapter 5. The table below gives a brief and simple overview of the hypothesis results, from the SPSS analysis. As shown 3/5 hypothesis were rejected and the other 2 were supported. This will be further discussed and explained in the sections that follow.

Table 6.1: Hypotheses Results

Hypotheses	Supported/Rejected
H1 (CF)	Rejected
H2 (TC)	Rejected
H3 (CBR)	Supported
H4 (SYN)	Rejected
H5 (CC)	Supported

6.2.1 There is a positive relationship between the utilization of customer feedback and the implementation of IMC

This first hypothesis was developed from the literature review on IMC. The literature review suggested that IMC process should always start with the customers and use that knowledge to make marketing programs (Kitchen et al., 2004). The usage of customer feedback should be vital to all firms. This allows the firms to use the knowledge on their customers to further understand their customers and make informed decisions as well as obtaining competitive advantage (Fuch & Schreier, 2011). This was also mentioned in a study by Laurie and Mortimer (2011), where they discuss four levels of integration of IMC. Customer knowledge and feedback is mentioned in two levels of their integration. This lead to the formulation of this hypothesis to determine if the use of customer feedback contributed to the implementation of IMC based on the perceptions of the Swedish marketers.

As shown in table 5.5, hypothesis 1 had a p-value of 0.949 which indicated that this hypothesis was rejected. This reveals that based on the findings of this study from the sample that the use of customer feedback is not as vital to the implementation of IMC as was proposed in the literature review. This does not necessarily indicate that customer feedback should be disregarded with implementation of IMC but should not be mainly focused on as a main aspect.

6.2.2 There is a positive relationship between the utilization of direct marketing and the implementation of IMC

Direct marketing is discussed in this study to be akin to targeted communication where you develop customized marketing programs for specific customers. Using targeted communications

is considered to be a main goal of IMC (Kitchen, 2005). This is done to affect customer behavior, furthermore, targeted communication is used to create a feeling of attachment between customer and product; and that attachment would be the main driver of customer purchase. The second hypothesis was derived from the literature review stated above (Ibid).

The hypothesis was developed to determine if there is a positive relationship between the utilization of direct marketing and the implementation of integrated marketing communications. The results found that (TC) or targeted communication had a p-value of 0.462 meaning that the hypothesis was rejected by the survey participants. This implies that the participants do not perceive targeted communication as a major attribute to IMC, yet it is also not meant to be, as customer focus, disregarded as an attribute of IMC implementation aspect.

6.2.3 There is a positive relationship between a good customer-brand relationship and the implementation of IMC

The creation of a customer-brand relationship is required for successful IMC (Kitchen et al., 2004). This hypothesis was first formulated to address the use of brand image in the implementation of IMC since a good brand image influences customer loyalty (Hung, 2008). Thus basically ensuring customer-brand relationship. This hypothesis secondly dealt with the management of the customer-brand relationship using CRM and its affiliation to the implementation of IMC. CRM could be used as a method for developing a customized IMC (Peltier et al., 2003).

The hypothesis was supported based on the p-value of 0.001 which is well within the 0.1 limit. This means that a good customer-brand relationship has a positive relationship with the implementation of IMC. The need for a clear and consistent brand image to develop relationships between the brand and the customers, needs to be taken into account with the intention of development of IMC programs, as well as using CRM to maintain a healthy relationship.

6.2.4 There is a positive relationship between synergy in message planning and the implementation of IMC

Integrated marketing communications deals a lot with incorporation of different marketing programs. Synergy, or coordination of messages would be an obvious choice for a construct of integrated marketing communications (Wang, 2006). Furthermore, Kitchen et al (2004) also state that the need for synergy is paramount with coordination of IMC. It was clear for the authors that synergy would be needed as a hypothesis. This lead to the formulation of the 5th hypothesis

which was to determine if synergy was an important aspect of integrated marketing communications implementation.

The results show that the p-value of synergy construct measured at 0.112, meaning it is rejected. Although its only .012 above the limit for a supported hypothesis, implying that synergy still should be considered as an important construct of implementing integrated marketing communications despite the fact the survey participants of this study might not entirely agree.

6.2.5 There is a positive relationship between the coordination of the communication channels and the implementation of IMC

The last hypothesis of this report was formulated from the support of Kitchen (2005) stating that IMC should use all forms of communication and all sources of brand or company contacts as potential source of delivery channels. The hypothesis was formulated to test if the statement above would be valid for the sampling size selected by the authors. The results found that the p-value for hypothesis 6 was 0.000 meaning the survey participants supported the hypothesis. There is a strong connection between the uses of all forms of communication, brand, or company contacts for the help/benefit of implementation of IMC (ibid). In conclusion this means that firms considering implementation of integrated marketing communications should pay close attention to *how* they use their communication tools.

6.3 Implications

The sections below will be devoted to the implications this study has on theory and the use marketers or managers can have reading this study. The first section will be focused on a strict, researched focused perspective and the second section will examine more practical implications this study has for managers.

6.3.1 Theoretical implications

This thesis is a study based on a small-scale research in the Swedish market. It has not reached a level that could contribute a lot to a theory such as IMC but some implications will be mentioned in this section. As discussed earlier in the study, the theory of IMC itself has a lot of researchers not being consistent or agreeing as to what IMC is (Kitchen & Schultz, 1997). This might justify the many research conducted in order to get the perceptions of IMC in a variety of countries (Duncan & Everett, 1993; Kitchen & Schultz, 1997; Kallmeyer & Abratt, 2001; Swain, 2004; Kitchen & Li, 2005).

The authors of this study could not find any research on IMC based on the Swedish markets and that is why this study was conducted, in order to fill a research gap. The main contribution of this study is to give an account of IMC perceptions based on a sample of managers in Swedish firms. As well as contributing to the research on IMC by investigating the main factors and their importance to IMC. This study revealed that from the sample of Swedish managers that the five factors may not be known to them as being very vital to IMC as was initially considered by the authors. Thus, showing that the perceptions of IMC are indeed different and may even be tainted by the multitude of IMC definitions there is (Kitchen, 2005).

6.3.2 Managerial implications

In addition to theoretical implications, a thesis should have managerial implications as well. The information above should be useful to practitioners or managers looking for information on integrated marketing communications in the Swedish market to better their competitive advantage.

The findings of this study suggest that all known constructs (stated in this study) and aspects of integrated marketing communications are not perceived as important or essential to the implementation of IMC according to Swedish marketing managers that participated in this study. Meaning the most important aspect of the findings of this study would be that customer brand relationship, and the use of all communications channels a particular firm has, is essential to the proper use and implementation of integrated marketing communications. That being stated, it does not mean the other constructs (targeted communications, synergy, and customer focus) of integrated marketing communication should be disregarded. Based on the sample size and the geographical location (Sweden) of where the survey was conducted, many survey participants did not perceive synergy, targeted communications, and customer focus as an important part of the implementation of integrated marketing communications.

In addition, this study can also be of use to managers or firms that are seeking information and general knowledge of integrated marketing communications. The authors provide an introduction to IMC and a variety of definitions as well as a table presenting the evolution of the definitions integrated marketing communications over the past 20 years that could be helpful to practitioners or managers seeking an introduction to integrated marketing communications.

6.4 Limitations

There are limitations to every study and the following limitations are the issues that occurred while conducting this study.

The matter of time was of great importance to this study. Due to the short amount of time, the majority of the sample could not be contacted. If the authors would have had the time to contact additional participants, perhaps the result might have been different than the ones obtained in this study.

The reliability of this study was acceptable but for one feature that had low reliability. Targeted communication has no reliability compared to all of the other factors. Targeted communication should be looked into in order to find a method to enhance its reliability.

The response rate of this study is low compared to other studies that have been conducted. The authors believe that the response rate is low due to inefficiency of the first e-mails sent to the marketers; the rate back then was unacceptably low. The authors successfully attempted to raise the rate by calling as many marketers as possible to encourage participation but due to time limit, not all contacts could be contacted by phones.

Another Limitation would be that the questionnaire was never translated to Swedish before it was sent to the contacts. Since using both languages in the questionnaire proved to be more effective in other studies, this obviously demonstrated an issue that affected the response rate in a major way.

6.5 Future Research

This section of the study makes suggestions for those interested in conducting further research. These suggestions are based on improvements that can be done to further studies.

The sample size of this study was roughly 80 Swedish firms and is not enough to accurately generalize findings for all Swedish firms. Thus, the first suggestion for further research is to get a bigger sample. A bigger sample can aid in getting more data and feeling confident about making accurate generalization of the findings (Tanaka, 1987).

The second suggestion is proposed due to the low response rate of this study. The authors propose to use more contact methods (Email, Phone calls, mail & etc.) when contacting the sample. In this study, the authors only contacted the sample using emails but when that did not get much responses, the sample was contacted through phone calls as suggested by an expert.

Therefore, calling the survey participants and asking for their participations would most likely yield a higher response rate.

The last suggestion deals with the construct (Targeted Communication) due to its unreliability. The measures for this construct used in this study were discovered to be unreliable and not measuring the required construct. The authors suggest that for future research to change the measures.

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Appendix A

Student Questionnaire (Linnéuniversitetet)

How would you rate the following statements?

	1= Strongly Disagree	2	3	4	5	6	7= Strongly Agree
Customer feedback is important to us	❏	❏	❏	❏	❏	❏	❏
We believe business decisions can be improved through customer feedback	❏	❏	❏	❏	❏	❏	❏
The use of databases with information about customer profiles is a vital part of our company's marketing communication programs	❏	❏	❏	❏	❏	❏	❏
We frequently use targeted communication to reach our customers	❏	❏	❏	❏	❏	❏	❏
The creation of marketing communication should originate from customer information	❏	❏	❏	❏	❏	❏	❏
Our target customers are narrow, specific and well defined	❏	❏	❏	❏	❏	❏	❏
Through a successful brand image, companies can establish trust between brands and customers	❏	❏	❏	❏	❏	❏	❏
Customer Relationship Management (CRM) is a good way to maintain healthy relationships with customers	❏	❏	❏	❏	❏	❏	❏
A good relationship with customers could lead to a more defined and clear brand	❏	❏	❏	❏	❏	❏	❏
We synergize our messages to maximize their impact on our customers	❏	❏	❏	❏	❏	❏	❏
We believe synergizing marketing messages will help deliver a clearer message to customers	❏	❏	❏	❏	❏	❏	❏
The importance of synergy lays within its purpose of unification of messages	❏	❏	❏	❏	❏	❏	❏
We use our communication	❏	❏	❏	❏	❏	❏	❏

channels with the intention of directly contacting our customers							
Through Communication channels, companies can establish a well-rounded dialogue with their customers	❏	❏	❏	❏	❏	❏	❏
Our Company selects a common strategy that unifies our communications disciplines (i.e. general advertising, direct response, sales promotion, public relations, events, etc.)	❏	❏	❏	❏	❏	❏	❏
IMC is a tool to develop and direct targeted communication	❏	❏	❏	❏	❏	❏	❏
IMC is a strategic business process utilized for brand communication programs	❏	❏	❏	❏	❏	❏	❏
IMC is a tool to deliver unified messages to customers	❏	❏	❏	❏	❏	❏	❏
IMC is a tool to affect the buying behavior of customers	❏	❏	❏	❏	❏	❏	❏
IMC is a tool to establish a two-way dialogue with customers	❏	❏	❏	❏	❏	❏	❏

Your current position in the firm:

How many years have you worked in the field of marketing?
1. 0
2. 1-5
3. 6-10
4. 11-15
5. Other:

Linnéuniversitetet
Kalmar Växjö

Appendix B
Cover Letter

Dear respondent,

We are a group of International Sales and Marketing students from Linnaeus University in Ljungby, Sweden. We are currently conducting research on behalf of our bachelor thesis (C-Uppsats). Our topic revolves around how Swedish firms in particular, perceive and/or use integrated marketing communications (IMC). In order to have a valid, feasible thesis, raw data will be needed to be gathered in the form of a questionnaire. We have previously sent emails to you regarding this survey and we thank you in advance for your answers and contribution to our project.

This survey may contain vocabulary that is hard to understand for some and/or unfamiliar words. The following will be devoted to help understand the survey and what we really mean by integrated marketing communications. Integrated marketing communication (IMC), by definition, is: "An audience-driven business process of strategically managing stakeholders, content, channels, and results of brand communication." What this means is that IMC is an approach to achieving the objectives of a marketing campaign. This is done through a well-coordinated use of different promotional methods (newspaper ads, TV commercials, billboards, etc.) that are intended to reinforce each other. Meaning all of your promotional tools are unified and not sending mixed, unclear, or confusing messages to your audience or end consumer.

Below is a small list of words that will be found in the survey and their definitions to assist you in completing the survey:

-Targeted communications: Having a specific region, audience, segment, populous, age group a company targets for marketing communications.

-Marketing communications: Messages or tools that are related to media, which are used to communicate with the market.

-Synergy/Synergize: Messages are connected into one coherent message; this message's impact is believed to be beyond that of any message on its own.

-Communication channels: This means advertising, PR, sales promotion, personal selling & etc.

-Customer Focused: Using customer knowledge/feedback to create business strategies.

Here is the link to the survey:

http://surveys.questionpro.com/a/t/AK0zrZQ6mP

    Please note that all information provided will stay within the hands of the authors and all firms will remain anonymous. We sincerely thank your for your time, effort, and contribution to our bachelor thesis and look forward to learning more about this topic reading your opinions.

Kind regards,

Adnan Tvrtkovic

Abdikadar Aden

Fikrie Kreidly

Linnéuniversitetet

Kalmar Växjö

Appendix C

Script for reminder to participate in the questionnaire (Via Phone)

"Hej,

Mitt namn är (author calling) och jag ringer från Linneuniversitetet angående en enkät som vi tidigare har skickat till er. Det är nämligen så att vi undersöker ett ämne inom marknadsföring som kallas Integrated marketing communications. Som ni ser på enkäten och e-mailet som vi skickade, så består IMC av fem olika faktorer som är också förklarade för att undvika missförstånd.

Vi märkte att ni är utav dem som inte svarade på enkäten och vi ringer för att både konfirmera ifall ni kommer svara och får påpeka hur viktigt det är att vi får inkludera er röst och expertis i enkäten".